

**Amendments to the Claims**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims**

Claim 1 (Withdrawn): An information processing apparatus for studying a target case by communicating information through a network, comprising:  
request means for requesting a first inspector to study the target case; and  
detection means for detecting access to a database relating to the target case by the first inspector.

Claim 2 (Withdrawn): The apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising:  
report means for reporting a detection result obtained by said detection means to a requester who has requested the first inspector to study the case.

Claim 3 (Withdrawn): The apparatus according to claim 2, wherein  
said report means checks an access state by the first inspector at predetermined time intervals, and issues a predetermined reminder when no access is detected a predetermined time after the request.

Claim 4 (Withdrawn): The apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising:  
suspension means for suspending a request from a requester who has requested the first inspector to study the case at an instruction of the requester.

Claim 5 (Withdrawn): The apparatus according to claim 4, further comprising:

re-request means for requesting a second inspector different from the first inspector at an inspection of the requester to accept a request of a requester who has requested the first inspector to study the case.

Claim 6 (Withdrawn): An information processing method for studying a target case by communicating information through a network, comprising the steps of:

requesting a first inspector to study the target case; and  
detecting access to a database relating to the target case by the first inspector

Claim 7 (Withdrawn): An program storage medium storing a program for realizing an information processing method for studying a target case by communicating information through a network, comprising:

a code for requesting a first inspector to study target case; and  
a code for detecting access to a database relating to the target case by the first inspector.

Claim 8 (Withdrawn): An information processing apparatus for studying a target case by communicating information through a network, comprising:

a table relating to organization information; and  
management means for selectively performing by referring to said table a first study management mode in which the target case is studied through a predetermined path, and a second study management mode in which an inspector who inspects the target case sequentially requests a subsequent inspector to study the case.

Claim 9 (Withdrawn): The apparatus according to claim 8, wherein said table relating to the organization information indicates a hierarchical management structure in a company.

Claim 10 (Withdrawn): The apparatus according to claim 8, further comprising: a study path pattern table storing a plurality of patterns of study paths for the first study management mode.

Claim 11 (Withdrawn): The apparatus according to claim 8, wherein in the second study management mode, a request for study is issued by specifying a name of an inspector without using said table relating to the organization information.

Claim 12 (Withdrawn): An information processing method for studying a target case by communicating information through a network, comprising the steps of:  
referring to a table relating to organization information; and  
performing a managing step by selectively performing based on said referring step a first study management mode in which the target case is studied through a predetermined path, and a second study management mode in which an inspector who inspects the target case sequentially requests a subsequent inspector to study the case.

Claim 13 (Withdrawn): A program storage medium storing a program for realizing an information processing method for studying a target case by communicating information through a network, comprising:

a code for referring to a table relating to organization information; and

a code for realizing a managing step by selectively performing based on said referring process a first study management mode in which the target case is studied through a predetermined path, and a second study management mode in which an inspector who inspects the target case sequentially requests a subsequent inspector to study the case.

Claim 14 (Withdrawn): An information processing apparatus for generating a document relating to a patent application by communicating information through a network, comprising:

association means for dividing a patent application procedure into a plurality of steps, and associating a reference document used in generating a document in step units with a due date of generation of the document; and

management means for managing generation of the document.

Claim 15 (Withdrawn): The apparatus according to claim 14, wherein said plurality of steps contain an application and a rejection reason response.

Claim 16 (Withdrawn): The apparatus according to claim 14, wherein

said management means manages generation of the document by making links to a management database for item management and a document database for document management.

Claim 17 (Withdrawn): The apparatus according to claim 14, wherein  
said management means manages generation of the document by defining a virtual file  
in a network.

Claim 18 (Withdrawn): The apparatus according to claim 17, wherein  
a timing of generating a file is defined in said step units relating to the virtual file.

Claim 19 (Withdrawn): The apparatus according to claim 17, wherein  
a process performed when a file is generated is defined in said step units relating the  
virtual file.

Claim 20 (Withdrawn): The apparatus according to claim 17, wherein  
a timing of extinguishing a file is defined in said step units relating to the virtual file.

Claim 21 (Withdrawn): The apparatus according to claim 17, wherein  
a process performed when a file is extinguished is defined in said step units relating the  
virtual file.

Claim 22 (Withdrawn): The apparatus according to claim 17, wherein  
a related document is defined in said step units relating to the virtual file.

Claim 23 (Withdrawn): The apparatus according to claim 17, wherein

a study and approval path is defined in said step units relating to the virtual file.

Claim 24 (Withdrawn): The apparatus according to claim 17, wherein  
said virtual file can be copied, and simultaneously distributed through a network using a  
plurality of paths.

Claims 25 and 26 (Cancelled).

Claim 27 (Currently Amended): An information processing apparatus ~~for accumulating~~  
~~technical documents relating to a patent application~~, comprising:

accumulation means for accumulating information about a related prior art document  
which has been is cited by the patent office for examining the in a prosecution of a patent  
application and a foreign patent application corresponding to the patent application in a first  
country and a related prior art document cited in another prosecution of a counterpart patent  
application in a second country different from the first country; and

display control means for displaying a list of the related prior art documents ~~/of said~~  
~~patent application and a list of the foreign patent application of corresponding to said patent~~  
~~application accumulated in said accumulation means in the same window~~ cited in each of the  
prosecutions of the patent application in the first country and the counterpart patent application  
in the second country.

Claim 28 (Previously Presented): The information processing apparatus according to  
claim 27, wherein

said display control means displays a flag indicating whether or not a prior art disclosure procedure has been performed on the prior art document.

Claim 29 (Previously Presented): The information processing apparatus according to claim 27, wherein

said display control means displays descriptions indicating correspondence between the prior art document and a rejection reason.

Claim 30 (Previously Presented): The information processing apparatus according to claim 27, wherein

said display control means displays a list of applications by which the prior art document has been cited relating to the prior art document.

Claim 31 (Currently Amended): An information processing method for accumulating technical documents relating to a patent application, comprising the steps of:

accumulating information about a related prior art document which has been is cited by the patent office for examining the in a prosecution of a patent application and a foreign patent application corresponding to the patent application in a first country and a related prior art document cited in another prosecution of a counterpart patent application in a second country different from the first country; and

displaying and controlling a list of the related prior art documents of said patent application and a list of the foreign patent application of corresponding to said patent application accumulated in said accumulation step in the same window cited in each of the

prosecutions of the patent application in the first country and the counterpart patent application in the second country.

Claim 32 (Currently Amended): A program storage medium storing a program for realizing an information processing method ~~for accumulating prior art documents relating to a patent application~~, comprising the steps of:

a code for realizing an accumulation step of accumulating information about a related prior art document which ~~has been~~ is cited by the patent office for examining the in the prosecution of a patent application and a foreign patent application corresponding to the patent application in a first country and a related prior art document cited in another prosecution of a counterpart patent application in a second country different from the first country; and

a code for realizing a displaying and controlling a list of the related prior art documents ~~of said patent application and a list of the foreign patent application corresponding to said patent application accumulated in said accumulation step in the same window cited in each of the prosecutions of the patent application in the first country and the counterpart patent application in the second country.~~

Claim 33 (New) An information processing apparatus according to claim 27, wherein said display means displays country information corresponding to the first and second countries.

Claim 34 (New) An information processing apparatus according to claim 27, wherein said display means displays date information which relate to the obtain date of the first and second prior arts.



Claim 35 (New) An information processing apparatus according to claim 27, wherein said display means displays the abstract of the first and second prior arts.

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